'I WAS FAIR,' AUTHOR SAYS OF JFK WORK

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New York, Dec. 18 (AP)—William Manchester denied today that he took advantage of Mrs. John F. Kennedy's "words and emotions" to write "Death of a President," the book she has sued to suppress as "tasteless and distorted."

Manchester, in his first significant public statement on the dispute, said, "John Kennedy was my President. To suggest that I would dishonor his memory or my association with him is both cruel and unjust."

Manchester, stressing that the Kennedy family had sought him out to write the definitive account of the President's assassination, said the late President's "standards of excellence had guided me thruout this work."

Manchester Is Quoted

This is the statement issued by Manchester:

"On July 29, 1966, I was informed by a member of the Kennedy family that because of President Kennedy's 'respect' for me as 'a historian and a reporter . . . members of the Kennedy family will place no obstacle in the way of publication' of my work.

"I believe that I am now—in December of 1966 — the same historian and reporter that I was in July and the same historian and reporter that I was in 1962 when President Kennedy expressed his confidence in me.

Situation Is Changed

"I feel that I am the same, yet clearly circumstances are not. A legal obstacle is sought to be placed in the way of publication of my book, 'The Death of a President.'

"I had hoped my book would be allowed to speak for itself,

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and I would not have to speak for it. This is no longer possible. The integrity of my book and my own honesty as a writer and a person have been attacked.

"In life John Kennedy belonged to all Americans. His cruel murder deprived us all. I cannot help but feel that some of the present bitterness comes from the dark nightmare of his death and the impotence in the face of death which we felt then and feel now.

"Was My President"

"John Kennedy was my President. To suggest that I would dishonor his memory or my association with him is both cruel and unjust. His standards of excellence have guided me thruout this work.

"I believe John Kennedy, who was himself an historian, would have wanted his countrymen to know the truth of those terrible days, and I have dedicated myself for nearly three years to reliving and reconstructing them so that the truth could be faithfully and accurately recorded.

"It has been said that my work is being published prematurely and that magazine serialization was not contemplated by the Kennedy family. This is not so. In the summer of 1966, authorization was given by the family for publication of the book in early 1967, to be preceded by serialization in Look magazine.

"It has been said that I have broken faith with Mrs. Kennedy: that I took advantage her confidence in me and t I recorded too faithfully words and emotions. I do believe this to be so. Mrs. Kennedy asked me to write th book; I did not seek the oppo tunity. Mrs. Kennedy gave m 10 hours of interviews; I di not, indeed could not, have con ducted these interviews withou her voluntary cooperation. Mrs. Kennedy herself did not ask to see the manuscript and still hasn't. If she had, I would, of course, have given it to her.

"Instead, the Kennedy family asked to have the book read by a number of friends and advisers. This was done, and appropriate changes were made in consultation with these distinguished friends. Mrs. Kennedy asked to have yet another friend read the book; this too was done and yet more changes were made.

"However, in the last analysis, this is my book. Neither Mrs. Kennedy nor any member of the Kennedy family nor anyone else is in any way responsible for my research or the content of my work.

"It is my responsibility, and I am confident that my book can withstand any objective test—particularly the test of time. I ask only that it be given the chance."